

SOAR! to remain open through the library

Written by George Browning
Tuesday, 11 March 2014 00:00 -

Although the people who will benefit the most from this news may not even be able to read it, the future of Washington County SOAR! is not as bleak as it looked a month ago.

Due to lack of funding, the adult literacy program was looking at closing its doors in February, but thanks to the efforts of board members, former Director Erica Schmidt and others, the program will remain open.

SOAR! will now be housed at the Salem Public Library and will function under the library's direction with an interlocal agreement between the two entities. Library Director Jill DuChemin said the agreement will give SOAR! the flexibility to go back out on its own at any time.

The SOAR! board of directors will remain intact and continue to make decisions for the organization.

The library hired Stephanie Rockey as a part time director for SOAR! who will oversee the

matches and monitor the students' progress. While the program is being cut back to the barebones, they will still provide necessary materials and a director to keep the program functioning.

SOAR!'s two main fundraisers: Seasonings Chili Cook Off and The Phantom Gala will remain and DuChemin said they will continue to seek funding for the Dictionary Project, which provides dictionaries to all third grade students in the county, and Put Your Nose in a Book, which provides books to all first grade students.

DuChemin said she wants people to know that although the library is taking SOAR! under its wings, funding is still needed to keep all the programs going.

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Schmidt is thrilled that SOAR! is able to continue under the library and did not have to completely close its doors, especially with so many matches currently meeting.

“I am so thankful the Library board and Jill helped to keep SOAR! operating in our Community,” she said. “We currently have 22 students and the interlocal agreement allows the students and tutors to continue to meet as usual.

“The community has been so supportive over the years. I hope that support will continue and SOAR! will remain successful.”